

his family, endured malnutrition, and escaped attacks by rebel groups seeking child soldiers, only to find himself alone in a refugee camp. He eventually was resettled in the United States, arriving in Vermont in 2001, graduating from the University of Vermont, becoming an American citizen, and going on to get his master's degree. He was my constituent for many years, and I am very proud of the work he did as a member of the South Sudanese diasporic community who returned to his native country to help rebuild. President Kiir may not have known that Abraham Awolich was my constituent or that I will always consider him my constituent. So I call upon him now to immediately release Kuel Aguer Kuel and Augustino Ting Mayai, to cancel the arrest warrants for Rajab Mohandis and Abraham Awolich, and end the repression of civil society leaders, journalists, and dissidents.

I want to read into the RECORD a quote from Abraham Awolich's statement at the launch of their movement. What he said is instructive to every citizen of every democracy around the world. He said, "In the last 10 years the people of South Sudan have been dormant, they have not been challenging the status quo in the Republic of South Sudan and we cannot expect to have a democratic country without active citizenship."

President Kiir has an opportunity now, with a new Parliament seated and the seeds for an active and engaged citizenry sown, to show true leadership. He has no time to waste, or he will risk wasting his country's future and losing the support of the United States.

BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in early 2011, I had one of the more unusual experiences of my Senate career. I traveled back in time, from a free and democratic Lithuania to a closed and totalitarian Belarus. The trip was less than 3 hours, but it took me back to a dark past.

You see, Belarus is the last dictatorship in Europe. But like many dictatorships, it claims to be a democracy. In December 2010, it held what was billed as a Presidential election. The victor in that rigged contest was a heavy by the name of Alexander Lukashenko. His first act, after seizing the Presidency, was to jail all of those who were bold enough to run against him.

Months later, I drove from Vilnius to Minsk to meet with the family members of those jailed candidates, who had been arrested by Belarus security services still called the KGB. Mind you, the original KGB was dissolved more than three decades ago. That tells you all you need to know about how much the Belarusian Government has evolved since the fall of the Soviet Union. My meeting with those family members was sobering, and it is an encounter I will never forget.

Fortunately, over time, we were able to see the release of all these brave Belarusians, but not because Alexander Lukashenko had a sudden change of heart. He is still the same authoritarian thug he has always been. The world was reminded of that a year ago, when another sham election was held in Belarus. True to form, Lukashenko was reelected in that rigged contest. And once again, he began jailing those who had opposed him.

When one leading candidate, social media personality Sergei Tikhanovsky, was arbitrarily jailed, his wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya stepped in to run in his place. She likely won the ensuing election, although we will never know for certain. The stolen electoral process that unfolded scared her into fleeing for safety in neighboring Lithuania.

Last month, Ms. Tikhanovskaya traveled to Washington, DC, to seek support for the Belarussian peoples' fight for freedom from tyranny. I was proud to meet with her, along with Senators SHAHEEN and SULLIVAN. And I was glad to see President Biden met with her as well. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is a brave patriot carrying the torch of democracy for all the people of Belarus.

I thought of her, and other Belarussian patriots, as I watched the Olympics this week. In Tokyo, another brave Belarussian woman, sprinter Krystsina Tsimansouskaya, dared to publicly criticize Belarussian Olympic officials, a group from Lukashenko's ruling party. For her audacity, Lukashenko ordered the 24-year-old sprinter to return to Belarus immediately, right before she was scheduled to run in the women's 200-meter race on Monday.

If she had obliged, there is a very good chance she would be locked up in a Belarussian jail at this very moment, along with so many other political prisoners. But Krystsina Tsimansouskaya said no. At the Tokyo airport, before she could be forced onto a plane home, she sought protection from Japanese police. She also appealed to the International Olympic Committee for help. Her appeals worked. The Polish Government granted her a humanitarian visa. And Slovenia and the Czech Republic said she was welcome in their countries, too.

Ten years since my trip to Belarus, I am still moved by the courage of so many Belarusians like Ms. Tsimansouskaya, Ms. Tikhanovskaya, and the thousands upon thousands who have peacefully protested for a better future. These heroic leaders are still trapped in a dark past thanks to the same ruthless dictator who continues to cling onto power.

They are willing to risk so much for a chance at freedom. They are unafraid to stand up to despots and defend democracy. And they are an inspiration to a world that needs it. I want them to know we see them, and America stands

with them in their efforts to create a better and truly democratic Belarus.

HUNGARY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a related note, Alexander Lukashenko may be the last dictator in Europe. But Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban is working hard to become the next dictator in Europe.

In his 15 years as Prime Minister, Orban has undermined Hungary's democratic institutions and the civil society groups that support them. He has dusted off the autocrat's handbook and used many of its familiar tricks, including using public funds to reward his cronies, spying on and jailing dissidents and independent journalists, and turning media organizations into his personal mouthpieces.

He spews ultranationalist bigotry dressed up as traditional values and rails against what he calls an immigrant invasion. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic cite him as a cautionary example of how democracies can die. Some European leaders have called for Hungary's expulsion from the E.U. because of Hungary's growing hostility to the bedrock values of democracy under Orban.

Despite this, every night this week, Tucker Carlson has broadcast his prime-time FOX show from Budapest, Hungary. He is not there to interview the brave supporters of Hungarian democracy who are trying to save their country from Orban and autocracy.

No, Tucker Carlson is in Hungary to praise Orban and hold up his strongman stunts as an example for America to follow. It is reported that he will also address a conference linked to Mr. Orban's anti-democratic nationalist movement.

Tucker Carlson has gone from spouting his dangerous anti-vax quackery and spreading the Big Lie at home, to travelling abroad to fawn over an autocrat and herald him as a leader worth emulating in this country.

Ronald Reagan would be horrified. We all should be.

THE GHOST ARMY CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the contributions of the Ghost Army units of World War II and explain why I decided to join the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act as a cosponsor. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Company, together known as the Ghost Army, used deception tactics to fool the German Army about the location of American troops. These specialized units used inflatable tanks and sound effects to give the impression of a larger presence. While their role was theatrical, the units suffered casualties and operated close to the front lines. For over 50 years, these units and the contributions of the men who comprised them were kept a secret. I